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ABSTRACT

The Bureau of Labor Statistics examined the characteristics of high school students and full-time college undergraduates who work during the school year. Data were from the October 1994 supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS). Findings indicated that over one-fourth of high school students and almost one-half of full-time college undergraduates were employed. In general, younger students were less likely to work than older students. College students were nearly twice as likely to work as high school students. In both high school and college, men and women were equally likely to have worked, although there were some differences within specific age groups. White high school students were about twice as likely to have to worked as black or Hispanic students. Among college students, about half of white and Hispanic students worked compared to just over one-third of blacks. Three-fifths of high school students and about two-fifths of college students worked in the retail trade. The vast majority of both worked 20 hours or less per week. Black and Hispanic high school students worked more hours than white students. Male and female students worked about the same number of hours. Over 90 percent of high school and college students combined were paid by the hour, compared with about three-fifths of all wage and salary workers. For college students, median weekly hours were about the same regardless of age, sex, or race. The median hourly earnings of high school students were $4.73 and of college students were $5.19. For both high school and college students, male and older students earned more. (YLB)

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WORK ACTIVITY OF STUDENTS EXAMINED BY BLS

Over a quarter of high school students and almost half of full-time college undergraduates work during the school year. The Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, has prepared the attached report examining the characteristics of these student workers.

Single copies of *Employment in Perspective*: *Work Activity of Students*, Report 897, are available from BLS, (202) 606-6378 or 606-6373.

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Employment in Perspective: Work Activity of Students

U.S. Department of Labor
Bureau of Labor Statistics

Report 897
August 1995

How likely are today's students to be working? For those who are working, what types of jobs do they have? How many hours per week do they work? How much are they paid? This report addresses these questions for high school and full-time undergraduate college students using data from the October 1994 supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS), a monthly nationwide survey of about 60,000 households.

Employment

Demographic characteristics. Over a quarter of high school students and almost half of full-time college undergraduates were employed in October 1994. Child labor provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act strictly limit the amount and kinds of work that 15 year-olds can perform.[1] Partly as a result, 15 year-old students were far less likely to work (and those who were employed worked fewer hours) than those 16 years and over. In general, younger students were less likely to work than older students. (See tables 1 and 4.)

Among high school students, 42 percent of seniors were employed in October 1994, compared with a third of juniors and 15 percent of sophomores. Even allowing for age, one's grade in school seems to affect the likelihood of having a job. For example, 16 year-olds in the 10th grade were less likely to work than those in higher grades. (See table 1.)

College students were nearly twice as likely to work as high school students. Their age, education, and experience may make them more attractive to some employers. Undoubtedly, another key factor is that college students more often need to work: Public high school is typically tuition free, whereas college is not. College students also tend to have more flexibility in scheduling their classes around work and vice versa. The likelihood of college students working increases with age. (See table 1.)

In both high school and college, men and women were about equally likely to have worked in October 1994, although there were some differences within specific age groups. In contrast, race and ethnicity played a significant role in the likelihood of students working. White high school students were about twice as likely to have worked as black or Hispanic students. Among college students, about half of white and Hispanic college students worked as opposed to just over a third of blacks. (See table 1.)

Where students work. Student workers were concentrated in a few industries and occupations in October 1994. Three-fifths of high school students worked in the retail trade industry, with half of those working in eating and drinking places. About two-fifths of college students worked in retail trade, but another 8 percent worked in educational services, which includes college work-study programs. In terms of their occupations, two-thirds of high school students were employed as sales workers (retail and personal services), food service workers, or in manual labor type jobs (handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, and laborers). Many college students also worked in those occupations, although a large proportion were in administrative support occupations. (See tables 2 and 3.)

Male students in high school and college were more likely to work as handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, and laborers than female students. Also, greater proportions of men than women worked in industries like agriculture, manufacturing, and business, automobile, and repair services; women were more likely than men to work in the services industry. (See tables 2 and 3.)

Hours and earnings

Hours. The vast majority of both high school and college students worked 20 hours or less per week in October 1994. Less than 5 percent of high school students worked full time (35 hours or more per week) compared with 12 percent of college students. (See table 4.)

[1] Child labor regulations are contained in 29 CFR part 570. See *Child Labor Requirements in Agriculture Under the Fair Labor Standards Act* (Child Labor Bulletin No. 102), WH Publication 1295; and *Child Labor Requirements in Nonagricultural Occupations Under the Fair Labor Standards Act*, WH-1330. Both are published by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment Standards Administration, Wage and Hour Division, and are available upon request.

Among high school students, age was a prime determinant of the number of hours worked per week. Due in part to child labor restrictions, 15 year-olds worked just 9 hours per week compared with 16 hours per week for those aged 16 to 24. Also, the relatively few black and Hispanic high school students who had jobs worked more hours than their white counterparts. Male and female students, on the other hand, worked about the same number of hours. For those in college, median weekly hours were about the same regardless of age, sex, or race. (See table 4.)

Earnings. Over 90 percent of high school and college students combined were paid by the hour on their jobs, compared with about three-fifths of all wage and salary workers. The median hourly earnings of high school students were $4.73—slightly more than the Federal minimum wage of $4.25 per hour. Ninety-two percent earned less than $6.00 per hour. As would be expected, college students earned, on average, more than high school students—but not much more. Median hourly earnings for college students were $5.19, with about three-fifths of those in college making less than $6.00 per hour. (See table 5.)

For both high school and college students, those who were older earned more than their younger counterparts. As with the overall workforce, male students earned more than female students, especially those in college.

Technical Note

Data on which this report is based are collected each October in a supplement to the CPS, a monthly survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. In the supplement, persons are asked about their school enrollment status. Data used in this report refer to enrollment in a regular school and do not include those enrolled in a vocational school. For more information on the work activity of students, contact Larry Leith, Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington, DC 20212. (202) 606-6378.

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Table 1. Employment-population ratios of high school and full-time college students by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin, October 1994

Age and level of school	Total	Sex		Race and origin		
		Men	Women	White	Black	Hispanic origin
High school						
15 to 24 years	28.1	28.8	27.2	31.3	15.3	16.4
15 years	12.0	12.7	11.3	13.3	5.6	5.0
16 to 24 years	35.1	35.6	34.5	39.3	19.2	20.9
16 years	29.0	29.7	28.2	32.7	14.3	16.1
17 years	41.8	41.2	42.4	46.4	23.0	29.0
18 years	36.0	34.9	37.7	40.2	24.5	14.6
19 years and over	31.1	41.7	18.0	35.4	16.3	23.2
9th grade, total	10.4	9.5	12.0	12.1	5.0	6.5
15 years	10.4	9.1	12.8	12.5	2.4	6.0
16 years and over	10.1	11.0	8.6	9.9	([1])	([1])
10th grade, total	14.9	17.6	12.3	16.9	7.7	4.1
15 years	12.7	15.4	10.2	13.7	7.3	3.2
16 years	19.6	23.1	15.5	24.5	8.0	3.8
17 years and over	18.2	13.8	23.5	22.1	([1])	([1])
11th grade, total[2]	33.3	34.0	32.6	36.2	20.8	25.9
16 years	34.9	34.8	35.0	37.4	21.7	24.6
17 years	37.1	39.3	34.0	41.1	24.3	36.4
18 years and over	26.0	29.2	20.1	25.0	([1])	24.0
12th grade, total[2]	42.2	42.5	41.9	47.4	22.1	23.2
16 years	30.7	34.3	27.7	36.2	([1])	([1])
17 years	45.3	44.9	45.8	50.2	22.5	30.1
18 years	40.9	39.6	43.1	45.5	26.4	17.4
19 years and over	32.1	41.4	21.3	37.5	([1])	([1])
College						
16 to 24 years	48.6	48.2	49.0	52.0	33.4	50.2
16 to 19 years	41.8	40.9	42.6	45.2	22.8	49.7
20 to 24 years	53.0	52.6	53.3	56.5	39.4	50.5
20 to 21 years	52.2	50.1	54.2	55.3	42.2	56.2
22 to 24 years	54.0	55.8	52.0	58.5	36.2	41.3

[1] Data not shown where base is less than 75,000.

[2] May include a small number of 15 year-olds, not shown separately.

NOTE: Dash equals zero.

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Table 2. Percent distribution of employed high school and full-time college students by occupation and sex, October 1994

Occupation	High school, 15 to 24 years			College, 16 to 24 years		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Managerial and professional specialty	2.5	1.9	3.2	14.3	14.3	14.4
Executive, administrative, and managerial	.5	.5	.6	4.0	3.4	4.6
Professional specialty	1.9	1.3	2.6	10.3	10.9	9.8
Technical, sales, and administrative support	32.2	19.1	47.2	44.3	34.3	52.9
Technicians and related support	.3	.2	.4	2.8	3.1	2.5
Sales occupations[1]	24.4	14.4	35.8	20.9	17.4	23.9
Sales workers, retail and personal services	23.5	14.2	34.1	18.5	14.8	21.7
Administrative support, including clerical	7.5	4.5	11.0	20.6	13.8	26.4
Service occupations	39.0	37.8	40.3	25.2	21.3	28.7
Private household	2.9	.3	5.8	.8	–	1.5
Protective service	.3	.3	.4	1.7	2.2	1.2
Service, except private household and protective[1]	35.8	37.3	34.1	22.7	19.1	25.9
Food service	28.9	30.8	26.8	14.8	12.8	16.6
Cleaning and building service	3.1	4.0	2.0	1.2	1.3	1.1
Personal service	2.9	1.9	4.0	4.8	4.3	5.2
Precision production, craft, and repair	1.9	3.1	.6	2.7	5.1	.5
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	17.2	26.2	6.8	11.6	21.5	3.0
Machine operators, assemblers, and inspectors	1.6	1.3	1.8	2.8	4.5	1.4
Transportation and material moving occupations	.7	1.1	.2	2.3	4.8	.2
Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, and laborers	14.9	23.8	4.7	6.4	12.2	1.5
Farming, forestry, and fishing	7.3	12.0	1.8	1.9	3.4	.5

[1] Includes other occupations, not shown separately.

NOTE: Dash equals zero.

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Table 3. Percent distribution of employed high school and full-time college students by industry, class of worker, and sex, October 1994

Industry and class of worker	High school, 15 to 24 years			College, 16 to 24 years		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Agriculture	6.4	10.0	2.3	1.8	2.9	.8
Wage and salary workers	3.6	5.2	1.7	1.2	1.7	.7
Self-employed workers	2.5	4.2	.5	.6	1.1	.2
Unpaid family workers	.4	.6	.1	([1])	.1	–
Nonagricultural industries	93.6	90.0	97.7	98.2	97.1	99.2
Private wage and salary workers	86.5	84.0	89.5	84.2	83.4	84.8
Goods-producing	4.4	5.7	2.8	6.8	10.6	3.5
Mining	.1	.1	–	([1])	.1	–
Construction	.9	1.6	.1	1.4	2.5	.5
Manufacturing	3.4	4.0	2.7	5.3	8.0	3.0
Service-producing	82.1	78.2	86.6	77.4	72.9	81.3
Transportation and public utilities	1.0	1.1	.8	2.9	3.9	2.0
Wholesale trade	.8	.8	.8	2.2	3.1	1.3
Retail trade	61.1	60.7	61.6	37.6	35.8	39.1
Eating and drinking places	33.0	31.8	34.4	15.4	15.0	15.7
Finance, insurance, and real estate	.9	.4	1.3	3.9	2.9	4.7
Services	18.4	15.2	22.1	30.9	27.1	34.2
Private households	3.7	1.8	5.8	1.0	.2	1.6
Miscellaneous services	14.7	13.4	16.2	29.9	26.9	32.6
Business, automobile, and repair services	2.7	3.9	1.3	4.5	5.7	3.5
Personal services	2.1	1.4	2.9	2.9	3.0	2.9
Entertainment and recreation services	3.8	3.7	3.9	4.2	4.4	3.9
Professional and related services	6.2	4.5	8.1	18.4	13.9	22.3
Hospitals	.6	.4	.9	1.7	1.6	1.8
Health services, except hospitals	1.2	.7	1.8	3.1	1.3	4.7
Educational services	.6	.7	.5	7.7	7.2	8.0
Social services	1.2	.8	1.6	2.5	.6	4.1
Other professional services	2.6	1.9	3.3	3.4	3.1	3.6
Government workers	3.0	2.6	3.4	12.0	11.4	12.5
Self-employed workers	4.0	3.3	4.7	1.9	2.0	1.9
Unpaid family workers	.1	–	.2	.1	.3	–

[1] Less than 0.05 percent.

NOTE: Dash equals zero.

Table 4. Hours at work of high school and full-time college students by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin, October 1994

Characteristic	Total at work	1 to 5 hours	6 to 10 hours	11 to 15 hours	16 to 20 hours	21 to 25 hours	26 to 34 hours	35 hours or more	Median weekly hours
High school									
15 to 24 years	3,132	330	677	680	821	270	208	146	15.1
15 years	409	104	148	84	42	7	12	11	8.7
16 to 24 years	2,724	226	528	596	779	263	196	135	15.6
16 years	961	117	220	232	256	72	55	10	14.9
17 years	1,331	96	260	292	386	138	90	69	15.7
18 years	323	10	40	68	115	35	33	24	19.6
19 years and over	108	3	9	4	22	19	18	33	25.1
Men	1,672	173	354	353	408	156	137	92	15.2
Women	1,461	157	323	327	413	114	71	55	15.1
White	2,748	305	603	593	718	221	188	119	15.1
Black	279	14	50	61	80	46	14	15	16.7
Hispanic origin	240	23	33	43	69	23	14	35	19.5
College									
16 to 24 years	3,470	141	473	544	940	453	493	425	19.9
16 to 19 years	1,166	60	162	203	321	168	143	110	19.7
20 to 24 years	2,304	81	312	341	620	285	350	315	20.0
Men	1,673	59	218	227	454	232	250	232	20.1
Women	1,797	82	255	317	486	221	243	193	19.8
White	3,006	120	405	472	817	391	436	366	19.9
Black	289	12	34	38	72	41	42	50	20.3
Hispanic origin	214	5	21	41	66	27	32	23	19.9

NOTE: Detail for the above race and Hispanic-origin groups will not sum to totals because data for the "other races" group are not presented and Hispanics are included in both the white and black population groups. Dash equals zero.

Table 5. Hourly earnings of employed high school and full-time college students by age and sex, October 1994

Characteristic	Total wage and salary workers[1]	Total paid hourly wages	Under $4.25	$4.25	$4.26 to $4.99	$5.00 to $5.99	$6.00 to $6.99	$7.00 to $9.99	$10.00 or more	Median hourly earnings
High school										
15 to 24 years	3,027	2,839	330	504	872	895	121	90	26	$4.73
15 years	278	247	59	50	52	81	–	4	–	4.62
16 to 24 years	2,749	2,592	271	454	820	815	121	86	26	4.74
16 years	964	903	122	171	260	281	14	29	26	4.67
17 years	1,269	1,193	106	204	439	326	97	21	–	4.75
18 years	407	394	43	73	87	177	7	7	–	4.79
19 years and over	110	102	–	6	34	30	3	28	–	5.35
Men	1,652	1,546	171	233	455	538	53	83	13	4.79
Women	1,376	1,293	159	271	417	357	68	8	13	4.68
College										
16 to 24 years	3,329	2,935	257	247	448	841	584	475	83	5.19
16 to 19 years	1,179	1,139	118	96	211	384	184	132	13	5.06
20 to 24 years	2,150	1,796	138	151	237	457	400	343	70	5.37
Men	1,584	1,326	40	39	143	469	334	235	66	5.62
Women	1,745	1,609	217	208	305	372	250	241	17	4.99

[1] Includes a small number who were not paid hourly wages; excludes the incorporated self-employed.

NOTE: Dash equals zero.